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Thatcher asked to report to Parliament on Soviet spy risk

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on Sunday was asked to make an urgent statement to Parliament on allegations that a translator accused of spying for the Soviets used a top-secret electronics center for one of the deepest penetrations of Western intelligence operations since World War II.

"What we are concerned about is whether . . . our national security is at risk," said Labor Party Member of Parliament Ted Leadbitter in calling for the statement.

He referred to a report in the Sunday New York Times that quoted unidentified senior American officials as saying the breach of security occurred at the Government Communications Headquarters, Britain's worldwide eavesdropping center, in Cheltenham.

The Times said a "mole" who penetrated the top-secret facility fed the Soviets information that could have allowed them to change their codes and protect their own secrets.

THE TIMES identified him as Geoffrey Arthur Prime, 44, a translator of Russian at Cheltenham.

In July, Prime was arraigned on espionage charges that a prosecutor described then as being "of the gravest possible nature." Prime was ordered held in custody for a hearing at a later date.

Details of Prime's arrest were not disclosed here because of stringent restrictions imposed by Britain's Official Secrets Act, under which he was arrested.

But the Times quoted American officials as saying Prime had access to highly classified information flowing into the Cheltenham center from satellites and ground stations operated by the United States.

BRITAIN'S HOME Office—which is re-

sponsible for domestic affairs—the Foreign Office and the prime minister's office all declined comment on the report.

But a spokesman for Thatcher said the prime minister would consider Leadbitter's suggestion that she make a statement on the affair to the House of Commons.

Leadbitter, whose questions in Parliament led to the 1979 exposure of Queen Elizabeth II's art historian, Anthony Blunt, as a Soviet spy, said the new allegations confirmed his suspicions about weaknesses in British spy agencies.

The legislator said he became aware of the allegations after reading a report in the Sunday Times of London, which subscribes to the New York Times news service and picked up the story without naming Prime or the intelligence facility involved.

U.S. OFFICIALS quoted by the New York Times said the breach of security at the Cheltenham communications center ranked among the most serious setbacks for Western intelligence in three decades.

The Cheltenham facility in Gloucestershire, western England, where Prime is said to have worked from 1968 to 1977, is at the heart of Britain's intelligence network.